


**What We Say Matters:  
Using our words to lift people Up**

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**What We Say Matters**  
**Language that Lifts people UP**

- ▶ Consider words and approaches that can be left behind.
- ▶ Describe diabetes language that is respectful, inclusive, person-centered and imparts hope.
- ▶ Practice communicating about diabetes using phrases free from judgement with a focus on a strength-based approach.



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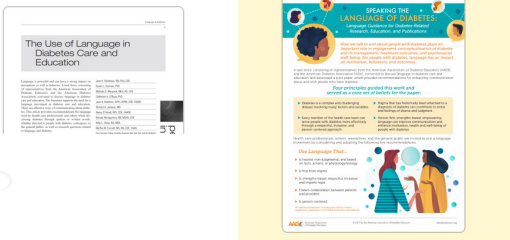
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**The Language Movement**

Full Article from *The Diabetes Educator*: [The Use of Language in Diabetes Care and Education](#)

Quick Guide for Healthcare Providers



Special recognition to Jane K. Dickinson, RN, PhD, CDCES for her vision, research and advocacy

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### SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF DIABETES:

*Language Guidance for Diabetes-Related Research, Education, and Publications*

*How we talk to and about people with diabetes plays an important role in engagement, conceptualization of diabetes and its management, treatment outcomes, and psychosocial well-being. For people with diabetes, language has an impact on motivation, behaviors, and outcomes.*

**Four principles guided this work and served as a core set of beliefs for the paper:**

- ▶ Diabetes is a complex and challenging disease involving many factors and variables
- ▶ Stigma that has historically been attached to a diagnosis of diabetes can contribute to stress and feelings of shame and judgment
- ▶ Every member of the health care team can serve people with diabetes more effectively through a respectful, inclusive, and person-centered approach
- ▶ Person-first, strengths-based, empowering language can improve communication and enhance motivation, health and well-being of people with diabetes

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### Stigma associated with diabetes

Have you heard others using these words or phrases?

- ▶ Cheat (er)
- ▶ No will power
- ▶ Diabetic
- ▶ Lazy, weak
- ▶ Non-compliant
- ▶ Train wreck
- ▶ Frequent Flyer
- ▶ Non-adherent
- ▶ Not intelligent
- ▶ Refuses to check blood sugar
- ▶ Forgot log book again
- ▶ Refuses to take their meds as directed
- ▶ Eats junk food
- ▶ Loves sugar
- ▶ They brought it on themselves

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### Early Adversity – Lasting Impact

Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html>

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## And what about us?

▶ We bring our life experiences to each interaction.



▶ Goal: Meaningful Interactions

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## Terminology matters in medical communication about weight

- ▶ For people with BMI >25 + preferred terms include:
- ▶ Person with elevated BMI
  - ▶ Person living with overweight / obesity
  - ▶ Person experiencing overweight / obesity
  - ▶ Person with excess weight



Pearl RL, et al. JAMA Surg. Sept 2018; doi:10.1001/jamasurg.2018.2702

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## Weight Neutral Approach



- ▶ Encourages engagement in health promoting behaviors
- ▶ Directs clients to the practices to maintain their life, rather than the pursuit of wt loss
- ▶ Encourages body trust and acceptance
- ▶ Advocates for using wt neutral meds

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## Setting goals using weight neutral approach

- ▶ I will continue to care for my body by doing [x].
- ▶ I will focus on small changes –such as testing my BG – instead of daily wts
- ▶ I will increase my self worth by telling myself “I am worth self-care”



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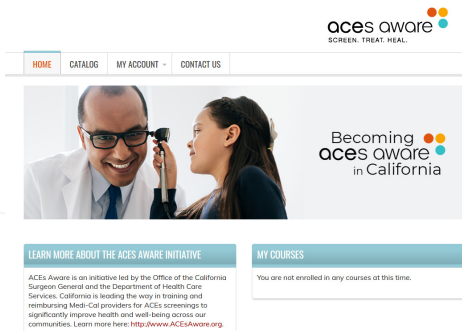
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## Please visit this site | Free Training



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## Quick question

- ▶ JS is 17 years old and rarely shows up for appointments. A1c is 11.9%. What might you ask JS?
- ▶ A. Are you fighting with your parents?
- ▶ B. I'm curious about what is standing in the way of making your appointments?
- ▶ C. Do you realize you are at risk for DKA?
- ▶ D. Is there a reason you haven't been coming to your appointments?



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## Providing Trauma Informed Approach

### Person's Action

- ▶ Not keeping appointments
- ▶ Not taking meds as prescribed
- ▶ Not adopting new behaviors

### Provider Reaction

- ▶ Refrain from accusatory language or judgement
- ▶ Encourage collaboration
- ▶ Be curious
- ▶ Ask open ended questions

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## Asking questions about trauma



In addition to the stresses of daily life, sometimes people with diabetes might have experienced something particularly difficult or traumatic.



We also know that experiencing violence is very common in many people's lives.



I'm just wondering if there's anything like this you might want to talk about?

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## Asking about trauma

- ▶ Sometimes adults also have poorer health if they experienced things like abuse, neglect or a family member with drug abuse or mental illness.
- ▶ If anything like that has happened to you, we have resources to help.



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## Self Reflective Question

- ▶ A person shows up to appointment, forgets their log book and meter and tells you they are only taking their daily insulin injection about 4 times a week.
- ▶ What feelings would that evoke?
  - ▶ Doesn't care
  - ▶ Non-compliant
  - ▶ Lazy
  - ▶ Better scare them
  - ▶ Exasperation

curiosity

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## Improved approach to language

- ▶ Mindset – come from a place of acceptance
- ▶ Approach – partner with participants.
  - ▶ “I am on your side”
  - ▶ Focus on person rather than the diagnosis
- ▶ Words are tools that can be used to encourage and focus on strengths.
- ▶ Not about being the word police
- ▶ Requires awareness and ongoing practice

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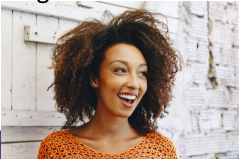
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## Let's use language that (is)

- ▶ Imparts hope
- ▶ Neutral, nonjudgmental
- ▶ Based on fact, actions or biology
- ▶ Free from stigma
- ▶ Respectful, inclusive
- ▶ Fosters collaboration between person and provider
- ▶ Avoids shame and blame



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## Guiding Language Principles

### Strength Based

- ▶ Emphasize what people know, what they *can* do.
- ▶ Focus on strengths that empower people

### Person-first

- ▶ Words that indicate awareness
- ▶ Sense of dignity
- ▶ Positive attitude toward person with diabetes

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## Language of Diabetes Education

### Old Way

- ▶ Control diabetes
- ▶ Test BG
- ▶ Patient
- ▶ Normal BG
- ▶ Non-adherent, compliant
- ▶ Disease

### New Way

- ▶ Manage
- ▶ Check
- ▶ Participant
- ▶ BG in target range
- ▶ Focus on what they are accomplishing
- ▶ Condition

American Diabetes Association, Diabetes Care  
The Use of Language in Diabetes Care and Education, 2017



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## Quick Question

- ▶ A 78 year old tells you they stopped taking their blood pressure medications. "It doesn't seem to matter whether or not I take them". What is the best response?



- A. Acknowledge their honesty and ask them to discuss with their provider.
- B. Gently remind them that stopping their meds is dangerous.
- C. Ask them if they are experiencing trauma at home.
- D. Explore possible reasons for this action.

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## Language of Diabetes Education

### Old Way

- ▶ Can't, shouldn't, don't, have to, should
- ▶ Regimen
- ▶ Refused
- ▶ Victim, suffer, stricken

### New Way

- ▶ Have you tried..."
- ▶ What about..."
- ▶ May I make a suggestion..."
- ▶ Plan, choices
- ▶ Declined, Chose not to
- ▶ ..lives with diabetes
- ▶ ...has diabetes

American Diabetes Association, Diabetes Care  
The Use of Language in Diabetes Care and Education, 2017

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## Quick Question

Which phrase represents the principles for communicating with and about people living with diabetes. ?

- A. You are checking your blood sugar daily.
- B. Your BMI indicates you're obese
- C. Your fasting blood sugar is above normal
- D. You should try and exercise 150 minutes a week.



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## Coaching Styles Matter

### Coaching Style

- ▶ Encouraging
  - ▶ Collaborative
- Leads to behavior change

- ▶ Discouraging
  - ▶ Other resources
- Not associated with behavior change



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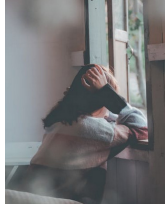
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## Expectancy Theory and Language

- ▶ When we label people, we form biases.
- ▶ We act out behaviors based on this label.
  - ▶ Providers also modify behavior in response to label
- ▶ The person labeled may take on attributes of that label.
- ▶ Do our language choices lead to clinical inertia?



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## Empowerment Defined

- ▶ “Helping people discover and develop their inherent capacity to be responsible for their own lives and gain mastery over their diabetes”.
- ▶ Posits:
  - ▶ Choices made by the person (not HCPs) have greatest impact.
  - ▶ PWD are in control of their self-management
  - ▶ The consequences of self-management decisions affect PWD most. It is their right and responsibility to be the primary decision makers.



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## Optimism and Resilience

- ▶ Our words have the power to create and transform
- ▶ Human connection is healing



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## Thank You



- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Email [bev@diabetesed.net](mailto:bev@diabetesed.net)
- ▶ Web [www.diabetesed.net](http://www.diabetesed.net)



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